

# **ARIZONA: SCOTTSDALE**

## **Education Campaign Helps Reduce Septic System Threats**

### **Background**

*Location:* The City of Scottsdale (City) is a community of 218,000 located in Maricopa County, Arizona.

*Water Supply:* The City owns and operates a municipal water system with approximately 80,000 service connections. Water sources include both surface water and groundwater. Surface waters consist of the Colorado River (through the Central Arizona Project) and the Salt and Verde rivers (through the Salt River Project). Groundwater supplies are withdrawn from the regional aquifer. Groundwater supplies include water withdrawn and treated to drinking water standards from the North Indian Bend Wash Superfund site, a regional plume of trichloroethylene (TCE) contaminated groundwater.

*Source Water Assessment:* In 2003, a Source Water Survey was completed on the City's behalf by a consultant. Recommendations contained in the report encompassed a number of activities, including increasing public education and addressing septic system use within the City. The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) is drafting an area-wide source water assessment for the regional surface water supplies.

### **Priority Contamination Threats**

The Scottsdale area has had extremely rapid growth that has resulted in a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural settings all mixed into one area. This rapid growth is one of the highest growth rates in the United States and is presenting challenges to protecting drinking water, both public and private sources. With new housing developments being built in source water areas, the City would like to increase public education and awareness on proper septic tank design and operation.

### **Local Team and Developing the Protection Plan**

The City plans to use the grant funds for public education and outreach materials addressing septic system use. To direct the effort, the City has assembled an informal project team. The team is comprised of water quality and water conservation personnel, with consultation from ADEQ personnel and water operations staff.

### **Protection Measures**

Efforts have been directed toward increasing public education and awareness on septic system operation, appropriate landscaping, and preventing septic system failures. The team has solicited for contract assistance from a local septic system expert and a professional writer to craft current and locally applicable public education materials. The public education materials address any special concerns related to septic systems within the arid local environment.

The City has other ongoing activities that complement this step, including:

- The City has a well abandonment program in place for the abandonment of inactive wells that may pose a conduit threat;
- The City has solicited consultant assistance in inventorying and mapping wells of different types that may have an impact on City water production wells. This included wells within the City that are not owned or operated by the City. Well types that are evaluated include water production wells, irrigation wells, recharge wells, and private residential wells. The City has developed a classification of wells by type and priority, with recommendations for future actions.
- The City maintains water production well sites and sanitary seals on all water production wells, in accordance with state and local requirements.

## **Contingency Planning**

The Water Resources Department has developed and distributed “A Guide for the Septic System Owner” to septic system owners located within the City and its water service area. There are approximately 7,000 homeowners who use onsite wastewater systems (septic systems) for disposal of their wastewater. In 2008, the City of Scottsdale updated its Wastewater Master Plan. The Master Plan identified a number of developed areas that are currently served by septic systems that will likely be connected to the municipal wastewater system at some point in the future.

## **Measuring Program Effectiveness**

The City of Scottsdale continues to distribute septic system educational materials the public as needed. Citizen calls and inquiries are documented in the city's call center database.

### **For further information, contact:**

Carie Wilson  
City of Scottsdale Water Resources Department  
Regulatory Compliance Manager  
(480) 312-8718  
[cwilson@scottsdaleaz.gov](mailto:cwilson@scottsdaleaz.gov)